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THE
Biſhop of Briſtol's *Thankſgiving*
SERMON
Preach'd before the
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE
HOUSE of PEERS,
On *Tueſday* the 29th of *May* 1716.

Die Mercurij 30° Maij 1716.

ORdered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, That the Thanks of this House be, and are hereby given to the Lord Bishop of Bristol, *for the Excellent Sermon by him Preached before this House Yesterday in the Abbey-Church,* Westminster; *And he is hereby desired to cause the same to be forthwith Printed and Published.*

Wm COWPER *Cler' Parliamentor'*

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

RIGHT HONOURABLE

Houſe of Peers,

AT

WESTMINSTER-ABBEY,

On *Tueſday* the 29th of *May* 1716.

BEING

The Day of Publick Thankſgiving to Almighty GOD, for having put an End to the Great Rebellion, by the Reſtitution of King CHARLES II. and the *Royal-Family.*

BY

GEORGE Lord Biſhop of *Briſtol.*

LONDON:

Printed for JONAH BOWYER at the *Roſe* in *Ludgate-Street.* MDCCXVI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PSALM CXV. I.

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's ſake.

THERE being no Title to this Pſalm, which ſhould lead Us into the Knowledge of the Author by Whom, the time When, or the Occaſion upon Which it was penn'd, there is room left for Conjecture, but no way of arriving at a Certainty, as to Any of theſe Points. All the Light We can have therein is from the ſubject Matter of the Pſalm; but even from That it doth not evidently appear, whether it was written in a time of publick Calamity by way of Supplication, in order to implore God's Bleſſing, or on occaſion of ſome publick Succeſs, by way of Thankſgiving for a Signal Mercy already receiv'd. To this Latter caſe it is very applicable, and God be praiſed that We have ſo happy an Occaſion, as this Auſpicious Day affords Us, thus to apply it. The Inſpired Author ſeems to have had His thoughts employ'd in the Contemplation of ſome Publick Bleſſing vouchſaf'd *to the Houſe of* Iſrael, *and to the Houſe of* Aaron; ſome *ver. 9, 10.*

late and remarkable Inſtance of God's having been *their Help and their Shield*; ſome Interpoſal of the Divine power in favour of his Beloved people, at a Critical time, when there was no proſpect of Humane Help; a devout Senſe of which made Him break out into theſe Words, full of great Humility and pious Gratitude.

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's ſake.

1. When the Pſalmiſt denies, that the glory of thoſe Mighty and Wonderful Succeſſes, wherewith God's people are at any time bleſſed, doth belong to Them, He intimates, that Men are apt to Aſcribe the praiſe thereof to their Own Merits, Counſels, or Atchievements.

2. When He with Earneſtneſs and Vehemence repeats that Denial, He doth by ſuch reiterated Negation imply the great Folly and Impiety of Mens thus aſcribing the glory of ſuch Succeſſes to Themſelves, or to any of the Children of Men.

3. When He expreſſes his Deſire, that the Glory thereof may be given to *God's Name*, He directs Us to pay the tribute of Praiſe and Thankſgiving to that Sovereign Being, to whom only of Right it is due.

4. When He requires, that this Glory ſhould be given to God *for His Mercy and for His Truth's Sake*, He inſtructs Us, that, when We receive ſuch Bleſ-

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ſings from the Hands of God, We derive them not from his Juſtice, but from his Clemency; they are not ſuch as We can of Right claim, but ſuch as He, out of His Unbounded Goodneſs, and regard to thoſe gracious Promiſes, which He hath made to his Church, vouchſafes to grant.

I. That Men are apt to aſcribe to Themſelves thoſe Signal and Glorious Succeſſes, which are not the fruit of their Own Induſtry, nor the contrivances of their own Policy, nor the acqueſt of their own Wiſdom and Strength, but the free Gifts of God, the gratuitous Largeſſes of his overflowing Bounty, and the unmerited Acts of his peculiar Goodneſs and Favour, is evident, as from many Other Inſtances, ſo more eſpecially from the intolerable Pride, and aſſuming temper of the *Iſraelites*, in whoſe Name the Penman of this Pſalm might be the more concern'd to diſavow any ſuch invaſion of God's peculiar Right, becauſe They had been in all Ages notoriouſly guilty of ſuch Unpardonable Uſurpation. No Generation of Men under Heaven could have more Numerous, more Senſible, more Demonſtrative proofs of their Dependence upon God, and their owing all the Advantages they enjoy'd to His immediate Providence, than the *Iſraelites* had: By his Power they were firſt eſtabliſh'd, and by his Protection they were conſtantly ſecur'd in the Poſſeſſion of their Laws, their Liberties, and all other their Temporal and Spiritual Rights. In every Step they

made from *Egypt* to the promis'd Land; from the Houſe of bondage to a Countrey flowing with an abundance of all things good and deſirable in Life, his Power was viſibly diſplay'd, and *his Arm made bare* before them: They were Brought forth, they were Conducted, they were Fed, they were Upheld by a continued Series of Miracles. That they might not attribute their Eſcape from the bondage of *Egypt*, and the Tyranny of *Pharaoh*, to their Own Policy and Contrivance, God reſcu'd them *by a Mighty Hand, and a Stretched out Arm, and in their Sight did marvellous things for their deliverance in the land of* Egypt, *even in the field of* Zoan: That they might not Aſcribe their ſafe paſſage over the Sea to their Own skill and conduct; *God divided the Sea and caus'd them to paſs through, and He made the Waters to ſtand on an Heap:* That they might not imagine they found their Way without any Superior direction or guidance; *In the day-time God led them with a Cloud, and all the Night with a light of Fire*; that they might not pretend their Maintenance on the Way was owing to their Own Care and Proviſion, and the early Preparations they had made for ſo long and difficult a March; *God clave the rocks in the Wilderneſs, and gave them drink as out of the great depths*; *He commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of Heaven, and rained down Manna upon them to eat, and gave them Angels food:* That they might not impute the Expulſion of their Enemies, and the Settlement of themſelves in the promiſed Land to

Pſal. 78. 12.

ver. 13.

ver. 14.

ver. 15.

ver. 23.

their

their Own Valour and Proweſs, to their Military Skill and Conduct; *God brought them to the Border* ver. 51. *of his Sanctuary, even to the Mountain which his right Hand had purchaſed; He caſt out the Heathen alſo before them, and divided them an Inheritance by line, and made the Tribes of* Iſrael *to dwell in their Tents.* And now can We imagine any Danger, any Probability, any Poſſibility, that Men thus call'd forth by the Audible Voice of God; thus Brought out, Directed, Suſtain'd, Secur'd, and put into actual Poſſeſſion of the Countrey of their Enemies by the Immediate Hand of God, ſhould at laſt look upon it not as God's Donation, but their own Acqueſt, and aſcribe the Glory of this Miraculous Expedition, theſe Surpriſing Deliverances, theſe Unparallel'd Succeſſes, not to God, but unto Themſelves? And Yet God, who knows the ſecret workings of Mens Hearts, and how apt they are to be infatuated with Proud thoughts and Vain conceits of their own Wiſdom and Power, even where their Weakneſs and Impotence are moſt conſpicuous, thought it neceſſary to caution that People againſt a Sin, of which it is not likely that they themſelves, Before ſuch Caution was given, or perhaps even After it was given, could think it ſo much as poſſible they ſhould ever be guilty. This Caution We find recorded for our Admonition in the like Caſes. *Deut.* viii. 11. *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God; ---- Leſt when thou haſt eaten, and art full, and haſt built goodly Houſes and dwelt therein; and*

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when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy ſilver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou haſt is multiplied, then thine Heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God; that very Lord and God, *which brought thee forth out of the Land of* Egypt, *from the Houſe of Bondage----and thou ſay in thine Heart, My power and the Might of my Hand hath gotten Me this Wealth.*

Now if it was Poſſible for That people in Thoſe Circumſtances to aſcribe their Wonderful Succeſſes to their Own power; if the Caution here given by God ſhews, that it was Probable they would do ſo, if the Event prov'd that they Actually did ſo, then can it not be thought Unlikely, that Other Perſons, in Different Circumſtances, where the Hand of God doth as Certainly, but not as Viſibly interpoſe; where Second Cauſes are more freely left to produce their Natural and Uſual Effects; where the Means made uſe of do manifeſtly and confeſſedly contribute to the End thereby accompliſh'd; ſhould be lifted up with their Succeſs, as gain'd by their Own Wiſdom and Conduct; ſhould look upon the Events which are wrought by the Prudence of their Counſels, or by the Prevalence of their Forces, as Owing intirely to thoſe Subordinate Cauſes, to which they cannot without Injuſtice be denied to be in a great Meaſure due; and conſequently ſhould want to be put in Mind, that although theſe are proper Inſtruments in God's Hands to bring about what He hath purpos'd, Yet they are ſtill but Inſtruments; and that therefore thoſe who

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under God have moſt contributed to the accompliſhing any Great and Glorious Event, (ſuch as was that We this day celebrate, the Reſtauration of our Ancient Government in Church and State) whether they were Men of Renown for Counſel, or for Action, whether they exerted themſelves in the Cabinet, or in the Field, Suffer no Diminution in their Character, when not out of any Envy or Ingratitude towards ſuch Worthy Patriots, but out of a Jealous concern for the Honour of *God*, We declare, that *not unto them, not unto them, but to his Name the Glory thereof ought to be given, for his Mercy, and for his Truth's Sake.*

II. We ought to be the more cautious of thus Aſcribing to our Selves or to the Sons of Men the glory of thoſe Succeſſes, which are due only to God, becauſe, as the Prohibition of the Pſalmiſt intimates that Men are very apt thus to proceed, ſo in the 2d place by the Vehemence and Earneſtneſs with which He repeats that Prohibition, (*not unto Us, not unto Us*) He expreſſes the great Folly and Impiety of Such procedure. To give that Glory to any Other being, beſides God, which is due only to God, is the proper Notion of Idolatry; and therefore, whether We fall down before an Image, or in the Pride of our Hearts arrogate divine Honours to ourſelves; whether the Idol We worſhip be the work of our Hands or the Creature of our Imaginations, We are in both Caſes equally Idolatrous. For Idolatry doth not Properly,

much

much leſs Solely conſiſt in the Outward expreſſions of Honour, but in the Inward Sentiments; He, who aſcribes to the Creature thoſe perfections which are peculiar to the Creator; He, who aſſumes to Himſelf, or attributes to Other Men the Honour of accompliſhing thoſe Events, which God only Doth, God only Can accompliſh, pays unto Man divine Worſhip, tho' He doth not bow the Knee to Him, or fall down proſtrate before Him. Hence is it, that Impious and Irreligious Perſons, who have inſolently claim'd to themſelves the Honour of thoſe great Events, which God hath wrought by their Hands, have in a very Exemplary and Remarkable Manner been puniſh'd by the Almighty for the Invaſion of his Peculiar and Unalienable Rights. Such was the Pride and Arrogance of the King of *Aſſyria*, who, becauſe God had made uſe of Him as a Scourge to chaſtiſe a ſinful and diſobedient people, was lifted up in his Heart, and inſolently boaſted of his Conqueſts, as gain'd entirely by his Own Irreſiſtible power. *For He ſaid, by the Strength of my Hand I have done it; and by my Wiſdom, for I am prudent; and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their Treaſures, and I have put down their Inhabitants, like a Valiant Man.* Righteous is the Judgment of God, who, in order to convince Such bold Pretenders of their Unſufferable Impiety and Folly, hath made them feel the terrible effects of that Divine power, which they affected to rival, and hath forc'd them to acknow-

Iſa. x. 13.

ledge

ledge the Frailty of their Mortal Natures, by levelling them with the very loweſt of Men, and bringing them back to that duſt, out of which his Almighty Hand at firſt raiſed them. Such was the fate of this haughty *Aſſyrian*, *when the Lord broke the Staff of his power, and cauſed the Arrogancy of this proud Man to ceaſe, and laid low the Haughtineſs of this Once terrible One.* Then did thoſe, over whom He had inſulted, whilſt He was in his Grandeur, triumph over Him in the day of his Abaſement, Speaking and Saying unto Him: *Art thou alſo become weak, as We? Art thou become like unto Us? Thy pomp is brought down unto the Grave; the Worm is ſpread under thee, and the Worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning? How art thou cut down to the Ground, which didſt weaken the Nations? Is this the Man, that made the Earth tremble, that did ſhake Kingdoms?* If We would keep at the Utmoſt Diſtance from feeling the like ſtrokes of Divine Vengeance, it will behove Us to keep at an Equal Diſtance from any the leaſt approaches towards the like Preſumption and Arrogance, and not only to hearken to the repeated Prohibition of the Pſalmiſt in not aſcribing the Honour of ſuch glorious Succeſſes to Men, but alſo in the 3d place to obey his Injunction in giving the Glory thereof to God.

Iſai. xiii. 11.

Iſa. xiv. 10, &c.

III. There is no Doctrine more frequently, or more plainly delivered in the Word of God, None,

of which We who profeſs to believe that Word ought to be more thoroughly perſwaded, than that All things are governed by a Wiſe and Over-ruling Providence; that thoſe Events, in the Accompliſhment of which the Abilities of Men eminent for Prudence, Courage, or any Other commendable Quality, do moſt manifeſtly ſhine forth, and moſt deſervedly gain publick Admiration and Applauſe, are not brought about without the Concurrence of a ſtill ſuperior Wiſdom, and Power; that be there never ſo much Foreſight and Counſel in the Forming of a Deſign, never ſo much Steadineſs and Application in the Carrying it on, never ſo much Vigour and Activity in the Execution of it, Yet, if God be Againſt it, if He be not For it, it cannot have the deſired Succeſs, it muſt of Neceſſity miſcarry; that therefore when We undertake any Enterpriſe of great Weight and Moment, and eſpecially in Affairs, where the Publick Safety and Welfare are concerned, We ought in the firſt place to apply ourſelves unto God by Prayers, and Supplications for his Aſſiſtance and Bleſſing; and that if our Hopes are Anſwered, and much more if they are Exceeded; if All that We asked of God is Granted, and greater Mercies, than We durſt preſume to ask, are Beſtowed; if the Means by Us employed are by his powerful concurrence rendred effectual for attaining the deſired End, We ought to give Him the Glory, and render unto Him our moſt Solemn Praiſes and Thankſgivings. It is Neceſſary, that We ſhould

have

have this firm Perſwaſion and lively Senſe of God's being the beſtower, as of every good gift, ſo particularly of All Publick and National bleſſings, that We may have an Adequate Value of the Mercy received; that We may be juſt to the Merits of thoſe, by whoſe Hands God is pleaſed to convey it to Us; and that We may not ſtop at Them, but in our thoughts may riſe up to Him, who is the Original Source and Well-ſpring of All thoſe Bleſſings, which like a plentiful Stream do overflow and enrich a Nation.

How great and ſignal ſoever any Temporal Bleſſing may be, howſoever Conſiderable in it ſelf, and fruitful of happy Effects, which may reaſonably be expected to follow from it; how Terrible ſoever the Danger, which by it is eſcaped, and how Valuable ſoever the Advantages, which are thereby gained, it can never be ſo great in Any of theſe regards, as it is in Conſideration of God the Beſtower of it. For No Enjoyment on this ſide Heaven can equal this comfortable Aſſurance, that the *Preſerver of Men careth for Us*, that *the Lord of all things delighteth to do Us good.* That which adds the greateſt Price to Any National Mercy, is, that it bears the Signature of Heaven, and is ſent Us as a ſure token of the Divine favour. In order therefore to form a right eſtimate of it's Worth, We muſt *lift up our Eyes to the Hills, from whence cometh our Help*; and our Joy will then be full, when We conſider *that our Help cometh from the Lord, which made Heaven and Earth.*

And as this Reflection will give Us juſt Sentiments of the Valuableneſs of the Mercy beſtow'd, ſo will it raiſe in Us a ſuitable Veneration for thoſe Worthy Patriots, whom God is pleaſed to pitch upon to miniſter to his Providence in the Conveyance of his bleſſings to the Sons of Men. For what can ſo much Diſtinguiſh or Dignifie any mortal Man, what can raiſe Him to ſo great an Height and Pre-eminence above Others, what can add ſo bright a Luſtre to his Name, as to be an Inſtrument in God's Hand; One whom He chooſeth out of the reſt of Mankind, to bring about his Great and Glorious purpoſes; by whoſe Courage or Conduct He delights to convey Deliverances and Mercies to his Church, and to a choſen People! Be his Fame never ſo far ſpread by the renown of his Actions, be his Title never ſo Noble by the Dignity of his rank, be his Intereſt never ſo great in the affections of the People, or in the favour of his Prince, Yet all theſe Honours are but mean and contemptible in compariſon of That much Greater glory, which redounds to ſuch an One from his being, as it were, an Angel of God, by whom He diſpenſeth His bleſſings to the Sons of Men. Great things are ſaid of *Naaman* in the Holy Story; that He was *Captain of the Hoſt of the King of* Syria: That *He was a great Man with his Maſter, and Honourable*; but the finiſhing Stroke of his Character is this; that *by Him the Lord had given Deliverance unto* Syria.

2 King. v. 1.

And

And as this Senſe of God's being the Beſtower of every National Bleſſing is thus Neceſſary to heighten our Opinion of the Mercy beſtow'd, and to increaſe our Eſteem for the Perſons through whoſe Hand it is conveyed unto Us, ſo is it to be deeply imprinted on our Minds, for this reaſon above All Others, that We may not be Unthankful to Him, who is ſo Watchful over Us, and ſo Beneficial to Us: that diſcerning his Hand in his Own work We may with our Lips, and from our Hearts, uſe thoſe Emphatical words of the Pſalmiſt, *To thee, O Lord, do We give thanks, Yea to thee do We give thanks.*

IV. And this we are the more ſtrongly obliged to becauſe according to our 4th Obſervation from the Words of the Text, When We receive ſuch Bleſſings from the Hands of God, We derive them not from his Juſtice, but from his Clemency; they are not ſuch, as We can of right claim, but ſuch as God, out of his Unbounded goodneſs to his Servants, and in regard to thoſe gracious promiſes, which He hath made to his Church, vouchſafes to grant.

We have before obſerved, how apt the *Jews* were to aſcribe unto themſelves the Honour of thoſe Performances, which were truly owing to God's Immediate power; and when they were by a remonſtrance of the Abſurdity of That pretence driven from a Plea ſo impoſſible to be ſupported, they then fled to Another, equally Unjuſtifiable; and being forced to acknowledge

knowledge the Interpoſition of God in their behalf, accounted for his peculiar Favour towards them from their extraordinary Merits above all other People and Nations. And therefore We find that *Moſes* took as much pains to confute this fond Notion of their Extraordinary Deſerts, as He did to explode the former concerning their Self-ſufficiency. That they might not falſly aſcribe the Victory they ſhould gain over their Enemies, and the Settlement they ſhould make in a fruitful and pleaſant Land to their Own Courage or Conduct, He tells them, by whoſe Power this ſhould be accompliſhed; *Hear*, O Iſrael, *thou art to paſs over* Jordan *this Day, to go in to poſſeſs Nations, greater and mightier than thyſelf; Cities great and fenced up to Heaven ---- Underſtand therefore this Day, that the Lord thy God is He, which goeth over before thee, as a Conſuming Fire; He ſhall deſtroy them, and He ſhall bring them down before thy face ------ ſo ſhalt thou drive them out, and deſtroy them quickly, as the Lord hath ſaid unto thee.* And that they might not aſcribe this Interpoſal of the Divine Power for the ſpeedy Deſtruction of their Enemies to their Own Piety or Virtue, He farther warns them againſt this Vain Preſumption. *Speak thou not in thine Heart after that the Lord thy God hath caſt them out from before thee, ſaying,* For my Righteouſneſs *the Lord hath brought me in to poſſeſs this Land ----- Not for thy Righteouſneſs, or for the Uprightneſs of thine Heart doſt thou go to poſſeſs their*

Deut. ix. 1.

ver. 4.

Land

Land ----- The Lord giveth thee not this good Land for thy Righteouſneſs, for thou art a ſtiff-necked People. In order to imprint in their Minds a deep and lively Senſe of this their great Unworthineſs, and to ſuppreſs all proud thoughts, which might ariſe in their breaſts concerning their Imaginary Title to God's Favour, He there goes on with a great deal of plainneſs and force to recapitulate to them their Numerous and Heinous Sins; Sins of the ſame Gigantic and Enormous Size, as were thoſe Sons of *Anak* that they were to ſubdue; Sins ſufficient to have forfeited the Love of God, and to have expoſed Them to the ſame Deſtruction, which He brought upon their Enemies, had not his regard to his Own Honour, and his concern to maintain the Truth of his Promiſes prevailed with Him to continue his Protection to that Church, which his own Right Hand had planted. This was the only Plea, which their powerful Interceſſor *Moſes* could make to God in their behalf: O *Lord God,* ver. 26. *deſtroy not thy people, and thine Inheritance, which thou haſt redeemed through thy Greatneſs; which thou haſt brought forth out of* Egypt *with a mighty Hand: Remember thy Servants* Abraham, Iſaac, *and* Jacob: *Look not unto the Stubbornneſs of this people, nor to the Wickedneſs, nor to their Sin ------ They are thy people, and thine Inheritance, which thou broughteſt out by thy mighty Power, and by thy ſtretched-out Arm.*

That

That We of this Church and Nation, which were once overwhelmed with Irreligion and Anarchy, do now again enjoy the free Exerciſe of Our Holy Religion, and Our Ancient Conſtitution of Civil Government; that We are here met together to render unto God the Tribute of Praiſe and Thankſgiving for the ſignal and wonderful Deliverances by his Wiſe and Good Providence as upon this Day Vouchſafed to Prince and People, to Church and State, and to all Orders and Degrees of Men in both; that the Bleſſings by the Divine Goodneſs then conferred on our Fore-fathers are ſtill continued to Us, and that We have a proſpect of there being derived to our Poſterity, is confeſſedly owing not to any Great degree of Virtue and Holineſs, for which we have been more Eminent than Other Nations, not to any Leſs degree of Vice, or lower Meaſures of Iniquity to be found among Us, than Other People have been guilty of, but to the Truth and Purity of that Holy Faith, which We profeſs, and to God's ſingular Love and Favour to his Church; who having brought his Vine out of *Egypt*, and planted it among Us; having prepared room for it, and cauſed it to take deep Root; having ſent out its Boughs unto the Sea, and its Branches unto the River, tho', in his juſt Indignation againſt the Sins of his People, He for ſome time ſuffered the Boar out of the Wood to waſte

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